

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L OTTAWA 3073

POUCHED ALL CONSULATES IN CANADA

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, CA

SUBJ: MINI RATHER THAN MAXI CABINET RESHUFFLE NOW PREDICTED

REF: A) OTTAWA 2356; B) OTTAWA 2317

1. SUMMARY: POLITICAL COMMENTATORS HERE ARE NOW PREDICTING A MINOR RATHER THAN A MAJOR CABINET RESHUFFLE IN EARLY SEPTEMBER. ARGUMENTS ARE THAT THIS WILL OBVIATE POSSIBLE EMBARRASSING BYELECTIONS FOR SEATS OF EX-MINISTERS AND WILL ALLOW FOR MORE POLITICALLY POTENT LARGE CABINET SHUFFLE IN LATE 1977. FINALLY, OBSERVERS CITE TRUDEAU'S LOYALTY TO OLD COLLEAGUES AS REASON FOR HIS UNWILLINGNESS TO CUT AWAY CABINET DEADWOOD. COUNTER ARGUMENTS CAN BE MADE AND IT IS SAFE TO ASSUME THAT NO ONE OTHER THAN TRUDEAU NOW KNOWS HOW HE WILL SHAKE UP CABINET IN LATE SUMMER OR FALL. END SUMMARY.

2. QUOTING "OBSERVERS" AND CITING "SIGNS, PORTENTS AND SMOKE SIGNALS," POLITICAL COMMENTATORS NOW PREDICT A "MINI" RATHER THAN "MAXI" CABINET RESHUFFLE, PROBABLY FIRST WEEK IN SEPTEMBER. THIS IS A DEPARTURE FROM EARLIER INDICATIONS OF MAJOR CHANGES (REFTEL), AND THE RATIONALE IS BASED ON THREE LIKELY CAUSES.

3. FIRST, COMMENTATORS CLAIM THAT LOW GOVERNMENT STANDING IN PUBLIC OPINION POLLS (REF B) MILITATES

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AGAINST MAJOR CHANGES NOW. THEY SUGGEST THAT INCUMBENTS

REMOVED MAY BE WILLING TO ASSUME REDUCED PARLIAM-
MENTARY ROLE AND MAY SIMPLY RETIRE FROM PARLIAMENT.
ENSURING BYELECTIONS COULD GO POORLY FOR LIBERALS CON-
TRIBUTING TO UNCHARACTERISTIC LIBERAL "LOSER" IMAGE.
LIBERALS LIKELY TO LOSE BOTH OTTAWA-CARLETON AND ST.
JOHNS WEST BYELECTIONS IN OCTOBER, IN ANY CASE, AND MORE
OF THIS BAD NEWS THEY DO NOT NEED.

4. SECONDLY, BEST POLITICAL TIMING WOULD ACCORDING TO
COMMENTATORS, DICTATE A BIG CABINET RESHUFFLE IN LATE
1977, NOT THIS SUMMER. THEORY IS THAT IMPACT OF SUMMER
OF 76 CHANGE WILL LARGELY BE FORGOTTEN BY PUBLIC AT
TIME OF LIKELY 1978 ELECTIONS AND THAT MAJOR SHOT OF NEW
CABINET BLOOD WILL HAVE MAXIMUM INFLUENCE IN 1977.

5. FINALLY, SOME CLAIM THAT TRUDEAU LOYALTY WILL
PRESENT HIM FROM DUMPING OLD CABINET FRIENDS WHO ARE
POLITICAL DEADWOOD, E.G. PUBLIC WORKS MIN DRURY
AND PRIVY COUNCIL PRESIDENT MITCHELL SHARP. HIS
REFUSAL TO REMOVE JEAN MARCHAND WHEN WELL AFTER MARCHAND
BECAME POLITICAL LIABILITY LENDS CREDENCE TO THIS VIEW..

6. COMMENT: WHILE ARGUMENTS ARE PLAUSIBLE, THEY
ARE ALSO DEBATABLE. FEAR OF LOSING BYELECTIONS
COULD BE UNFOUNDED. PM'S DOMESTIC POLITICAL ADVISOR
MICHAEL KIRBY POINTED OUT TO POLCOUNS THAT THERE COULD
BE NUMEROUS CHANGES WITHOUT MUCH OUTWARD MOVEMENT.
THREE MINISTERS (DRURY, MACKASEY AND LEBLANC) HOLD
DUAL PORTFOLIOS AND SPLITTING EACH WOULD CREATE
THREE OPENINGS FOR NEW APPOINTMENTS. GOVERNMENT COULD
BRING IN SIX NEW FACES, REPRESENTING 20 PERCENT OF CABINET AT
COST OF ONLY THREE OLD FACES. RESULT COULD BE NO BYELECTION
IF THOSE OLD FACES COULD BE TALKED INTO REMAINING AS MP'S.

7. ARGUMENT CAN BE MADE THAT GOOD, POLITICAL TIMING
CALLS FOR "MAXI" SHUFFLE NOW. WHATEVER THE SITUATION
MAY BE IN LATE 1977, FACT REMAINS THAT LIBERALS ARE IN
TROUBLE NOW.

8. TRUDEAU LOYALTY TO OLD FRIENDS IS UNDENIABLY ONE
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OR MORE ATTRACTIVE PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES OF THIS COM-
PLEX MAN. BUT TRUDEAU CAN BE A POLITICAL ANIMAL OF
THE MOST EFFECTIVE KIND AND EVERYONE HERE IS WAITING
FOR THE POLITICAL TRUDEAU OF OLD (1968 AND 1974) TO
RE-EMERGE. SUBORDINATING PERSONAL LOYALTY TO POLITICAL
EXPEDIENCY WOULD BE AN IMPORTANT SIGN.

9. NO ONE OTHER THAN TRUDEAU KNOWS HOW HE WILL SHAKE

UP CABINET. DECISION IS HIS ALONE AND, FROM PAST EXPERIENCE,
HE WILL KEEP OWN COUNSEL UNTIL HE MAKES THAT DECISION.
ENDERS

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